

Dated: July 29, 1998.

Jamie Rappaport Clark,

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 285

[I.D. 080498B]

Atlantic Tuna Fisheries; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna; Closure

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: General category closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS has determined that the 1998 Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) June-August period General category subquota will be attained by August 8, 1998. Therefore, the General category fishery for June-August will be closed effective at 11:30 p.m. on August 8, 1998. This action is being taken to prevent overharvest of the General category June-August period subquota. **DATES:** Effective 11:30 p.m. local time on August 8, 1998, through August 31, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Pat Scida, 978-281-9260, or Sarah McLaughlin, 301-713-2347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of BFT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 285. Section 285.22 subdivides the U.S. quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas among the various domestic fishing categories.

General Category Closure

NMFS is required, under § 285.20(b)(1), to monitor the catch and landing statistics and, on the basis of these statistics, to project a date when the catch of BFT will equal the quota and publish a **Federal Register** announcement to close the applicable fishery.

Implementing regulations for the Atlantic tuna fisheries at 50 CFR 285.22 provide for a subquota of 388 mt of large medium and giant BFT to be harvested from the regulatory area by vessels permitted in the General category during the period beginning June 1 and ending August 31. Based on reported catch and effort, NMFS projects that this subquota will be reached by August 8, 1998. Therefore, fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or

giant BFT by vessels in the General category must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time August 8, 1998. The General category will reopen September 1, 1998, with a quota of 194 mt for the September period. If necessary, the September subquota will be adjusted based on actual landings from the current period. While the General category is open, General category permit holders are restricted from all BFT fishing, including tag-and-release fishing, on restricted-fishing days. However, for the remainder of August, previously designated restricted-fishing days are waived; therefore, General category permit holders may tag and release BFT while the General category is closed, prior to the September 1 opening.

The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the June-August period subquota established for the General category.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 285.20(b) and 50 CFR 285.22 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*

Dated: August 6, 1998.

Gary C. Matlock,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 98-21576 Filed 8-7-98; 10:38 am]

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